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## "PLAYING IN THE DARK" DURING THE ELIZABETHAN PERIOD

BY THORNTON SHIRLEY GRAVES

Some time ago I published a little note entitled *Night Scenes in the Elizabethan Theatres*,<sup>1</sup> prefacing it with the remark that I hoped the evidence therein contained would occasion "some slight modification" of the conclusions advanced by Mr. W. J. Lawrence in a more elaborate discussion of the subject.<sup>2</sup> Recently Mr. Lawrence, in a reply at some length,<sup>3</sup> has given my note more attention than it deserves; but since he has obviously misunderstood radically certain statements which I made, and in consequence has somewhat confused the issue, I feel that I ought, in justice to both him and myself, to restate my chief contention more clearly and to support it with considerable evidence, some of which was not in my possession when the original note was written.

This chief contention was this: Performances were sometimes given in the Elizabethan public, or open, theatres at such times of darkness (late afternoon and night) as to make imperative the use of artificial lights otherwise than episodically as "a factor of the scene"; therefore it is reasonable to suppose that, during certain scenes of such performances requiring artificial illumination, the stage was sometimes slightly darkened<sup>4</sup>—as it was in the private, or roofed, theatres—as a means of suggesting night to the spectators.

Now for the evidence which proves that plays were given in the public theatres at such times of darkness. I shall first discuss performances which began, or were in progress, at late hours of the afternoon during winter, after which I shall supplement the evidence already given by Mr. Lawrence and myself to show that plays were sometimes given at night in the regular London playhouses. To what extent such night performances were confined to private theatres, it is impossible to say.

Mr. Lawrence argues that my use of evidence indicating that the London officials objected to plays after evening prayers involves

<sup>1</sup> *Englische Studien*, 47, pp. 63 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 45, pp. 181 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, pp. 213-30.

<sup>4</sup> Probably by removing the stage lights or by shading them. Such a method, I admit, would have been clumsy and slow, but no more so than the "clapping down" of windows in the private theatres.

a "serious misconception" of the term *evening prayers* (p. 221); and he even takes the trouble to explain that evening prayers were really afternoon services. That they were anything else never entered my mind. Mr. Lawrence will note that, when I asserted that "allusions to plays beginning after evening prayers are frequent," I was discussing performances at "late hours," not performances at night; and as a matter of fact when I made the assertion above, I had in mind the very passages—as my reference to Miss Gildersleeve's book indicates—which he has used to show that evening prayers were afternoon prayers. And plays after evening prayers, in winter at any rate, can truly be called plays at late hours.<sup>5</sup>

Now to show that plays really did begin after evening prayers on Sundays and holy days—when all persons were expected to attend services—both in London and the suburbs, and that some of these plays continued until "inconvenient time of night," it will be necessary to go rather fully into government regulations of the drama and to give the proper background to certain documents, which, quoted by

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the time of evensong, or evening prayer, during the Elizabethan period, there is considerable uncertainty. As long as the old canonical hours were observed, the proper hour for evensong was six o'clock; and some recent writers urge that this remains the proper hour for evening prayer. Others, however, argue that when the old offices were condensed into morning and evening prayer, no regular hours were fixed for saying either, the hours being left to the officiating ministers (Wheatley, *Illustrations of Book of Common Prayer*, ed. 1867, pp. 80, 195 note).

Whether the hours varied according to season, or whether they differed appreciably in cathedrals and parish churches, I do not know, but the statement by Harrison in his *Description of England* (ed. 1585, chap. i) to the effect that "times of morning and evening prayer remain as in times past" implies more or less regularity in the time of services. Now, from various sources of evidence, it seems that evening prayers during Elizabeth's reign commonly began about three o'clock. Bayne (*Shakespeare's England*, I, 62), discussing Edwin Sandys' articles issued in 1571 for the London diocese, says that the "due and convenient hours" set by authority for evening prayer meant generally "2 to 3 P. M." But certain evidence points to a later hour. William Percy's "Memorandum," for example, to his *Necromantes*, intended to be acted by the Children of Paul's, states that performances by the Children were "not to begin before foure, after prayers" and it will be remembered that Herbert and Nicholas Farrer very carefully observed in their prayers "the canonical hours of ten and four." Finally, Harrison in his *Description of England* (ed. Furnivall-Withington, p. 105) says: "For the nobility, gentlemen, and merchantmen, especially at great meetings, do sit commonly [at meals] till two or three of the clock at afternoon, so that with many it is a hard matter to rise from the table to go to evening prayers and return from thence to come time enough to supper."

Mr. Lawrence without this necessary background, may possibly convey a false impression regarding the frequency of such plays at "late hours."

As is well known, Sabbatarianism in England is a Puritan product; and the period 1590-1642 gave forth a considerable number of treatises regarding the nature and observance of the "Sabbath." It is also a well-known fact that Queen Elizabeth considered Sunday to be of no more significance than any other holy day and to be observed accordingly;<sup>6</sup> and she actually vetoed a parliamentary bill for the stricter observance of the day.<sup>7</sup> As a result of the views of the Queen and of many officials high in Church and State, the "profanation of the Sabbath" was apparently never regarded as a very serious offence. Prior to 1580 Sunday was the regular day for public plays; and outside the jurisdiction of the city, Sunday performances were common throughout her reign. Heylyn in his *History of the Sabbath* is essentially correct in his statement:

I finde indeed that in the yeere 1580. the Magistrates of the Citie of London obtained from Queen Elizabeth, that Playes and Enterludes should no more bee Acted on the Sabbath day, within the Liberties of their Citie. As also that in 83. on the 14 of January being Sunday, many were hurt, and eight killed outright by the sudden falling of the Scaffolds in Paris-garden. This shewes that Enterludes and Bearebaitings were then permitted on the Sunday, and so they were a long time after, though not within the Citie of London; which certainly had not beneene suffered, had it beneene then conceived that Sunday was to bee accounted for a Sabbath" (ed. 1636, pt. II, 249).

Heylyn fails to mention the fact that apparently the Privy Council after the Paris Garden accident forbade Sunday plays in and near London, but he is right in affirming that such performances continued to be given; for violations of the Sunday law were common in the latter years of Elizabeth's reign,<sup>8</sup> as they were indeed during the reigns of James and Charles.<sup>9</sup>

If the Queen and crown officials were willing that plays should be given on Sundays and legislated against such performances largely out of consideration for the Puritan feeling of London, they were, on their own accord, consistently opposed to plays during divine

<sup>6</sup> Lewis, *Critical History of Sunday Legislation*, 98-99; Heylyn, *History of Sabbath*, II, 241-43.

<sup>7</sup> Neal, *Hist. of the Puritans*, I, 302.

<sup>8</sup> Gildersleeve, *Gov. Regulations*, 209; Thompson, *Puritans and Stage*, 106, 114-117, 120; Malone Soc. *Collections*, I, pt. 1, 64, 65, 68, 76, 80.

<sup>9</sup> Gildersleeve, 210; Thompson, 153, 188.

services. This is brought out by the fine imposed by the Act of Uniformity of 1558 on absentees from services on Sunday; by the order of the Privy Council of 1571 to the London authorities,<sup>10</sup> stipulating that certain players be allowed to perform in "overt & open places," provided they did not act in "the tyme of devyne services"; by the Queen's license in 1574, allowing Leicester's players to perform in London and elsewhere at all times except in "the time of common prayer or in the tyme of great and common plague in our said Citye of London"; and by the traveling license to Lord Strange's company<sup>11</sup> in 1593, forbidding them to act during the "accustomed times of Divine Prayers." Apparently the Queen and Privy Council, especially the former, were not especially concerned when players acted, provided they behaved themselves and refrained from giving plays during plagues and divine services.

Under such circumstances, then, is it not certain that actors in the suburbs would naturally be inclined to delay their performances until after evening prayers, even though such performances in the winter would cause them certain inconveniences?<sup>12</sup> And that plays on Sunday were given in the suburban theatres during winter, there is no doubt. In 1580, for instance, it was declared that Braynes and Burbage "on the 21st day of February [Sunday] . . . and on divers days and occasions before and afterwards brought together and maintained unlawful assemblies of people" to hear plays at the Theatre.<sup>13</sup>

Further light on plays at late hours in public playing-places may be furnished by a discussion of conditions inside London.

Naturally, for financial reasons, the actors preferred to act during winter inside the London inns; consequently they attempted to get around the various regulations of the city authorities, who, obviously more opposed to plays on Sundays and at late hours than were the Queen and Privy Council, tried various methods of ridding London of players. Evidence of the hostility of the city is earlier than 1574, but in this year the Common Council passed the familiar order stipulating, among other things, that dramas were not to be given "in anie vsuall tyme of dyvyne s<sup>r</sup>vice in the sonndoe or hollydaie nor

<sup>10</sup> Harrison, *Desc. of England*, ed. Furnivall, IV, 318-19.

<sup>11</sup> Gildersleeve, 208.

<sup>12</sup> I am, of course, not arguing that plays were never given during the time of "divine services."

<sup>13</sup> Murray, *Eng. Dram. Companies*, I, 30.

receyve anie to that purpose in tyme of s<sup>r</sup>vice to see the same."<sup>14</sup> The actors, however, did not strictly obey this law. As the Council put it, they "did forbear beginning to play til service were done, yet all the time of service they did take in people; wch was the great mischief in withdrawing the people from service."<sup>15</sup> As a result of this and other offences—one of which was obviously the duration of certain performances until an inconvenient time of night—the London authorities became greatly wrought up. In 1580, according to Mrs. Stopes,<sup>16</sup> the Common Council passed an order to pull down all the playhouses within the city; in July, 1581, they ordered "that preceptes shal be forthwith made and dyrected" to the various aldermen, specifying that "from henceforthe durynge the pleasure of thys Courte, they suffer no playes, Enterludes, Tumblynges, Pryces, or other suche publyque shewes . . . by any parson or parsons whatsoever";<sup>17</sup> and in the following November<sup>18</sup> the Mayor ordered the aldermen to command the inhabitants of their various wards to prevent "the setting up anye papers or briefes uppon anye postes, houses, or other places within your warde, for the shewe or settinge oute of anye playes, enterludes, or pryzes, within this Cyttye, or the lybertyes and suberbes of the same, or to be played or shewed in anye other place or places within two myles of this Cyttie."

The Privy Council was not satisfied with such drastic orders; hence in April, 1582, it requested that the city withdraw the "late inhibition against their playeing on the said hollydaies after euening prayer onely forbearing the Sabothe daie whollie." But the Council was willing to recognize the complaint of the city against plays during darkness, for it requested that the actors be allowed to perform "on the ordinarie S. Hollydaies after euening prayer as long as the season of the yere may pmitt and may be without daunger of the infection."<sup>19</sup> Two days later the Mayor replied that the instructions of the Privy

<sup>14</sup> Malone Society, *Collections*, I, 2, p. 177.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 2, p. 171.

<sup>16</sup> Harrison, *Desc. of Eng.* ed. Furnivall, IV, 320n. With this passage should be compared Rawlidge's statement, in 1628, that about 1580 the City expelled the players and "quite pulled down and suppressed" the playhouse in its jurisdiction.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 320. This is apparently a reference to the severe order which Miss Gildersleeve conjecturally assigns to the spring of 1582 (*Gov. Regulations*, 163-4. Cf. also Malone Soc., *Collections*, I, i, p. 52; *ibid.*, I, 2, pp. 169, 171.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

<sup>19</sup> Malone Soc., *Collections*, I, i, p. 53.

Council, notwithstanding this concession, could "hardly be done"; "ffor thoughe they beginne not their playes till after euening prayer, yet all the time of the afternone before they take in hearers and fill the place with such as be therby absent from seruing God at Chirch, and attending to serue Gods enemy in an Inne; If for remedie hereof I shold also restraine the letting in of the people till after seruice in the chirche it wold driue the action of their plaies into very inconuenient time of night specially for seruantes and children." Notwithstanding this complaint the Privy Council, on May 25, again ordered the revoking of the "late inhibition."<sup>20</sup> The issue of the contest was probably averted by the ensuing plague. But in November, 1583, when the plague had ceased, the Privy Council again requested the city authorities to allow the players to perform inside the city; and it is noteworthy that they were willing to grant certain concessions. Plays were to be given only "vpon the weke daies and worke daies at conuenient times . . . (sondaies onely excepted) and such other daies wherein sermons and lectures are comonly vsed."<sup>21</sup>

As a result of the request the city authorities permitted the twelve Queen's Servants to perform at the Bull and Bell inns "and nowhere els wthin this Cyttye";<sup>22</sup> but they were soon obliged to cancel the permission, since, as they put it in 1584, "last yere when such toleration was of the Quenes players only, all the places of playeing were filled with men calling themselves the Quenes players."<sup>23</sup>

Naturally the Queen's Players objected; hence *ca.* November, 1584, they petitioned the Privy Council that, since "the yere beyng past to playe att anye of the houeses wthout the Cittye of London," they be allowed to act in the city "according to the articles" which were submitted.<sup>24</sup> The "Articles" have been lost, but one of the requests was obviously the privilege of playing in London on holy days after evening prayers. This is brought out in the objection by the city to the "second article" of the players: "If in winter the dark do cary inconuenience: and the short time of day after euening prayer do leaue them no leysure: and fowlenesse of season do hinder the passage into the felde to playes: The remedie is ill conceyued to bring them into London."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, I, i, p. 54.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 67.

<sup>22</sup> Wallace, *First London Theatre*, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Malone Soc., *Collections*, I, 2, p. 174.

<sup>24</sup> Malone Soc., *Collections*, I, 2, p. 170.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

Is it not the fair and logical inference from this passage, considered in connection with what precedes, that the Queen's Men had been performing in the Fields after evening prayers, but naturally wishing to get inside London during the winter months, were complaining that such performances in the Fields were attended by certain inconveniences to actors and audience alike? And is it not further evidence in support of the contention above that the companies who did perform after evening prayers in the Fields during winter necessarily prolonged their dramas to "inconvenient time of night"? Be it remembered that the order above concerns only the Queen's Players. Various other companies were acting in the Fields at this period.

The city authorities, however, were unwilling to allow the Queen's Men to perform in London after prayers during winter; consequently, in the "Remedies" submitted to the Privy Council as a result of the petition of the players, they proposed:

That no playeing be on holydaies but after euening prayer: nor any receiued into the auditoric till after euening prayer.

That no playeing be in the dark, nor continue any such time but as any of the auditorie may returne to their dwellings in London, before sonne set, or at least before it be dark.<sup>26</sup>

This very clever double-barrel regulation, if adopted, would have prohibited all holy day plays in London during winter and all plays after dark; it would have gone a long way toward that total abolition of drama which the London authorities so much desired. But the passage above is not to be taken as proof that common plays "in the dark" were henceforth not given. In the first place, there is no evidence that the "Remedies" were accepted. And even if, as Strype thinks, they were accepted, or, as Miss Gildersleeve believes, some compromise was effected, it may be pointed out that in either event plays after evening prayers outside the jurisdiction of the city would not have been affected. In the second place, we know that plays during winter continued in London after 1584, and that some of them at least were given "in inconvenient times." In November, 1588, the civic authorities ordered Sir Rowland Hayward and others to approach the Privy Council in order "to move theyre honours for the suppressinge of playes and interludes within this Cittye and the libertyes of the same";<sup>27</sup> in the following November the Mayor complained of the contemptuous performance of the Lord Strange's

<sup>26</sup> Malone Soc., *Collections*, I, 2, p. 174.

<sup>27</sup> Harrison, *Desc. of Eng.*, IV, 322.



men at the Cross Keys;<sup>28</sup> in February, 1592, the Mayor petitioned Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, to come to the rescue of the city and protest to Tilney, Master of the Revels, who having been authorized by the Queen "to refourm exercise or suppresse all manner of players, playes & playeng houses whatsouer, did first licence the sayed playeng houses wthin this Citie for his Mats sayed service."<sup>29</sup> On the following March 6, Whitgift promised to comply with the Mayor's request;<sup>30</sup> hence on March 18, Sir Richard Martin and others were sent by the Mayor to treat with Tilney "for some good order to be taken for the restrayning of the players and enterludes within this Citie."<sup>31</sup>

Yet, in spite of all these complaints and protests, plays obviously continued in London at inconvenient hours, as is brought out in Lord Hundson's petition of October, 1594, stating that, whereas his players—obviously at the Cross Keys—had heretofore begun their performances "towards fower a clock," they would hereafter, as a special concession to the city, begin at two, provided they were allowed to act at the Cross Keys during the coming winter.

Such are the circumstances which I had in mind when I treated very briefly in my original note the subject of plays at late hours. From this evidence, to summarize, it is clear that plays were sometimes given in London after evening prayers in winter; that the city objected to such performances "in the dark," but that their objections were sometimes ignored; that the Queen and Privy Council were apparently not so very anxious regarding plays in the darkness, provided the actors refrained from performing during divine services; and that actors, when they could do no better, performed in the open theatres after evening prayers on winter Sundays and holy days.

Mr. Lawrence (p. 223) accuses me of jumbling together in an unscientific manner data relative to the accustomed hours of performance at taverns, inns, public and private theatres, and argues that there must have been a measure of difference in the customs of temporary and permanent playing-places. He may also object to a similar jumbling together of data in the discussion above. But it must be remembered that the hours of performance in the cases just considered are not to be accounted for on the basis of theatrical

<sup>28</sup> Malone Soc., *Collections*, I, 2, p. 181.

<sup>29</sup> Malone Soc., *Collections*, I, i, p. 69.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>31</sup> Harrison, IV, 322.

custom. They are the direct result of government regulations which affected all performances of a public nature, whether in regular theatre, inn, inn-yard, or tavern.

Nor are the public theatre plays which began in winter after evening prayers on Sundays and holy days the only cases of "playing in the dark." Mr. Lawrence (p. 219), speaking of the hour of performance in Elizabethan times, says that the boundaries of performance "would be two o'clock to six, with a sliding scale according to the season." Now it may be noted that on cloudy winter days a play of average length which began even as early as two o'clock in the open playhouses would surely require artificial lights before the conclusion of the production.<sup>32</sup> But there is not a tittle of evidence that two o'clock was ever the *customary* hour for beginning dramas even in winter. On the other hand, various passages may be cited which show that the audience went immediately from the theatre to supper; and the extant evidence points overwhelmingly to three o'clock as the accustomed hour for plays on ordinary occasions.<sup>33</sup>

At this point it may not be amiss to discuss one bit of evidence bearing upon the question in hand. Mr. Lawrence (p. 220) cites a passage from Holinshed showing that on April 6, 1580, the spectators were still at the public theatres "about six of the clock toward evening," but he is apparently inclined to doubt the accuracy of the statement,<sup>34</sup> and he doubts if the testimony bears on winter performances. And why may it not bear on winter performances, if abundant evidence points to three o'clock as the usual hour for beginning plays? Let us cite here a passage by Sir John Davies, which has been erroneously

<sup>32</sup> That plays were given during winter at the Theatre, Curtain, Globe, Hope, Red Bull and Fortune, there is no doubt (cf. Wallace, *First London Theatre*, pp. 8, 17, 19; Murray, *Eng. Dram. Cos.*, *passim*; Graves, *Court and London Theatres*, 36 note).

<sup>33</sup> I have discussed at greater length the matter of duration of plays and hour of performance in an article entitled *The Act-Time in Elizabethan Theatres*, *STUDIES IN PHILOLOGY*, July, 1915.

<sup>34</sup> Note in this connection that Arthur Golding wrote a pamphlet entitled "A discourse upon the Earthquake that hapned through the Realme of Englande . . . the sixt of Aprill, 1580, betweene the houres of five and six in the Evening"; and Munday in his *A View of Sundry Examples* (1580) asserts that the earthquake occurred "at 6 of the clock at night," and that the people came running from the playhouses "surprised with great astonishment" (*Shakespeare Soc. Publications*, XIV, 94). He states further that the Gentlemen of the Temple were at supper when the earthquake came.

used by Malone and others to show that plays began at one. In Epigram 39, Sir John, speaking of Fuscus, says:

"First he doth rise at 10, and at eleuen  
He goes to Gyls, where he doth eate till one,  
Then sees a play til sixe, and sups at seauen,  
And after supper, straight to bedd is gone  
.....  
Thus rounde he runs without variety:  
Saue that sometimes he comes not to the play  
But falls into a whore-house by the way."

It will be noted that Davies is speaking of the *general* routine of the man-about-town; and it is also to be noted that he is obviously speaking of the public theatres, for his epigrams were surely written after the first Blackfriars had gone out of existence (1584) and before the completion of the second Blackfriars. Nor is it at all likely that Davies had in mind the playing-place of the Children of Paul's, whose dramas at this time ended at six, to be sure, but did not start until four, after prayers. Fuscus could hardly have spent agreeably at Paul's the intervening time between one and four; at the Theatre or Curtain he could have passed away an hour or so in a manner congenial to his disposition. That spectators were admitted early to the playhouses is brought out by the complaints of the Common Council cited above and by the entertaining story told by Gayton in his *Notes on Don Quixot*, ed. 1654, p. 14.

I have given, I believe, evidence sufficient to show that artificial lights, surely at the fag end of public theatre plays, were imperative in a large number of instances. It remains to discuss at some length the reasons for believing that night performances were sometimes given in these same theatres.

I cannot understand why such expressions as "there is reason to believe that night performances in the public theatres were rather frequent in the days of Shakspeare" and "from time to time by representing their dramas at night" have led Mr. Lawrence to believe that I am arguing for night performances "as an alternative norm."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Mr. Lawrence asserts (p. 224) that, when I accept Stubbes' "extravagant diatribe as gospel," I imply a regular custom of night performances; and he is certain that Stubbes' "daylie and houely, night and daye, tyme and tyde" is "mere antithetical exaggeration." Now I am not aware that I accepted Stubbes' words as gospel; I said, and continue to say, that, if the fact of night performances in public theatres is established—and Mr. Lawrence admits that they did occur—

The evidence for afternoon as the usual time for performances in the theatres is, of course, overwhelming. I am not interested in proving "an alternative norm." All I wish to do is to show that what the Elizabethans at any rate called "night" plays are "rather frequent"; for if I show that evening performances occurred at all in the public playhouses before either a public or private audience, that in itself invalidates Mr. Lawrence's original contention that artificial lights were never employed in the open theatres otherwise than episodically as a factor of the scene.

Before giving evidence, in addition to that already given by Mr. Lawrence and myself,<sup>36</sup> to show that night performances were given in the regular Elizabethan theatres, it will be well to discuss the Elizabethan use of the word *night*. This is necessary in order to determine the possible meanings of the various statements in the prologues, especially, of the period to the effect that the performance will be given "to-night" or "this night."

Harrison in his *Description of England* (III, ch. 14), discussing the English way of computing time, writes as follows: "Of the arti-

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then Stubbes' words cannot be cavalierly dismissed as a mere rhetorical flourish. Of course the passage is exaggerated. Usually such Puritanic denunciations are exaggerated, but I have observed from my reading of Puritan literature and from listening to the outbursts of certain American evangelists—the lineal descendants of Stubbes and his ilk—that whereas such persons are sometimes absurdly vociferous in their denunciations, they nevertheless always have some justification in actuality for these protests. Stubbes in his own day was ridiculed for his "ignorant zeal," but, as Furnivall, Thompson and J. D. Wilson all recognize, "no matter how extreme or laughable [his] words sometimes were, there was always behind them a real truth." So his description of "the kissing and bussing," "the clipping and culling," etc., at the playhouse is rhetorical and exaggerated, but Mr. Lawrence would not deny that it had behind it a real truth. Nor would he deny that dancing at night in Stubbes' time was unknown, when the Puritan extravagantly asserts that people "set up schools of it," and frequent "nothing els night and day, Sabaoth day and other." If this is true and if night performances *did* take place in the late sixteenth century, why dismiss Stubbes' "Night and daye" as "a mere antithetical exaggeration"?

<sup>36</sup> To the various allusions to plays at night may be added the uncertain statement made by Busino on Dec. 8, 1617. Describing his experience at one of the various London theatres, he writes that on "that very evening the secretary was pleased to play off a jest upon me." Then follows an interesting adventure with a well-dressed female who sat near him at the play (*Cal. State Papers, Venice*, 1617-1619, 67-68). Before one can speak with certainty regarding what Busino meant by a play "that evening," one will have to consult the original letter. This I have been unable to do.

ficiall we make so farre accompt, as that we reckon it daie when the sun is up, and night when the sun leaueth our horizon." Quite naturally, therefore, the Elizabethans in winter would refer to five in the afternoon<sup>37</sup> as "night"; and frequently they would use the term loosely to refer to the period from five to six in fall and spring.<sup>38</sup>

When, therefore, we find in the prologue to a play the assertion that it will be given "to-night" or "this night,"<sup>39</sup> or a statement in an epilogue that the drama has been given "this night,"<sup>40</sup> the statement may mean that the play was given at late hours in the afternoon during winter; as for example, the words in the prologue to Jonson's *Epicoene*, acted by the Children of the Chapel in the winter of 1610. Again, the Children of Paul's began their performances at four o'clock or later; hence when Sir Edward Fortune in *Jack Drum's Entertainment* says that he saw "the Children of Paules last night," he may be referring to a winter performance; or, since Sir Edward is presumably speaking during the Whitsuntide period, he may be referring to a special night performance (after supper) during this time of festivity.

The use of the word *night*, then, in Elizabethan plays proves nothing in itself. The expression, as we have seen, may refer to plays in the late afternoon, especially in winter. On the other hand, if it is established that plays were sometimes given at night proper

<sup>37</sup> Cavendish, describing the entertainment given by Henry VIII to the French ambassadors, writes: "Thus . . . did thay spend the whole night, from five o'clock in the night, until two or three o'clock in the morning" (*Harleian Miscellany*, V, 153). Goodman (*Court of King James*, I, 163) speaks of five o'clock in December as "night." Burton's *Philosophaster* was acted on Shrove Monday "night," beginning at five o'clock and ending at eight (*Historical MSS Commission*, IV, 356).

<sup>38</sup> In the fall of 1631, the court decreed that one Wilson should sit in the stocks "from 6 of the clocke in the morning till six of the clocke at night" (Collier, *Annals*, 1831, II, 35). Ralph Josselin in his *Diary* says that the fire of September, 1666, "ceasd ye 5 at night" (Camden Society, 155). Wm. Lilly in his autobiography (ed. of 1812, p. 45), speaking of the spring of 1625, says that "about five or six of the clock" there would appear "every night" a large number of strange boys, who would go home "just as it grew dark." Sir Wm. Sanderson (*Compleat History*, 1656, p. 333), describing the riding feat of John Lepton in 1606, asserts that on "May 20 Monday he set out from Aldesgate at three of the clock in the morning, and came to York between five and six at night."

<sup>39</sup> *Epicoene*, *Staple of News*, *Wily Beguiled*, *The Elder Brother*, *Antipodes*, *Covent Garden Weeded*, *Chances*, prologues for revivals of *Custom of the Country* and *The Woman Hater*.

<sup>40</sup> *New Inn*, *Coxcomb*, *Little French Lawyer*, *Wit at Several Weapons*.

in the regular theatres, and if we find occurrences of the word *night*, as in university and court prologues, referring to performances that were actually given at night, then it follows that the "to-night" or "this night" in the prologues and epilogues written for the regular theatres *may* refer to strict evening performances.

Mr. Lawrence writes (pp. 225-26): "If we could assume that night came in those days when candles had to be lit we could arrive at a reason for references to 'to-night' in contemporary inductions and prologues. Most of these references occur in private theatre plays and in the private theatre it was customary to light candles at the outset. A conventional method of expression would arise which would be generally adopted, in the public theatres as well as the private." And he remarks that the "conventional" use of the expression occurs in Restoration plays, citing the prologue to *The Rehearsal*:

"Would some of 'em were here, to see, this night,  
What stuff it is in which they took delight."

Now for several reasons I cannot accept this idea, for I believe that the use of the expression during the Restoration was no more conventional than it was during the Elizabethan period. It is true that various references to "night" occur in the prologues and epilogues of Restoration plays,<sup>41</sup> but it should be kept in mind that these same prologues and epilogues may have been composed for evening performances. That evening performances were regularly given at the Cockpit at Whitehall during the reign of Charles II, there is no doubt, Pepys having attended such performances on various occasions.<sup>42</sup> Nor am I convinced that evening performances during the Restoration were confined to this theatre.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, the prologue to Otway's *Don Carlos* (1676), the prologue to Wilson's *Belphegor* (1690), the epilogue to Shadwell's *The Humorists* (1670), the prologue to Etheredge's *The Man of Mode* (1676), etc.

<sup>42</sup> See his diary under following dates: Nov. 20, 1660; April 20, 1661; Oct. 2, 1662; Dec. 1, 1662; Feb. 23, 1662-3.

<sup>43</sup> Is the word *night*, for example, used loosely in the contemporary account of the well-known intrigue between Wycherly and the Duchess of Cleveland: "She was that Night in the first Row of the King's Box in Drury Lane, and Mr. Wycherley in the Pit"? Is the author of the *Grammont Memoirs* certainly speaking of court plays or of gambling, when, describing events that took place a considerable time before 1667, he says that Killigrew and the Duke of Buckingham "generally sat down to dinner at four o'clock, and only rose just in time for the play in the evening" (Bohn edition, p. 297)? Is Mrs. Pinchwife, in Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (ca. 1673) supposed to be ignorant of London conditions, or to be referring

Again, the people of the Restoration and early eighteenth century sometimes used the word *night* in pretty much the same way the Elizabethans used it to refer to late afternoon. To illustrate, the epilogue to Farquhar's *Recruiting Officer*, acted on April 8, 1706, has the words: "All ladies and gentlemen that are willing to see this comedy, called the *Recruiting Officer*, let them repair to-morrow night, by six o'clock, to the sign of the Theatre Royal in Drury-lane." After about 1690, when plays regularly began sometime between five and six in the afternoon, references to the fact that performances will be given "this night" or "to-night" are frequent.

Under such circumstances, then, there is nothing very conventional about the use of the word *night* in the prologue to *The Rehearsal*, cited by Mr. Lawrence. This production was acted in December, 1671; and since afternoon plays regularly began at this date about half past three, or possibly even as late as five o'clock,<sup>44</sup> the word could well have been applied to a performance that continued until after sunset.

From what precedes, I think that we may reasonably conclude that the expressions "to-night" and "this night" found in the prologues of the Elizabethan and Restoration periods are not so much conventional expressions which arose in consequence of the lighting of candles at the outset of private theatre plays, as they are terms which were really confined to those performances which continued until after sunset or began after supper. In other words, they were the expressions of authors who really said what they meant to say.

Let us now consider the evidence for plays after supper in the regular theatres. I shall first give some general reasons why we should expect such performances.

Certainly the matter of precedent is worth mentioning. Plays at the universities, at court, and before private audiences at inns and

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to court plays, when she remarks (III, i): "Well, but pray, bud, let's go to a play to-night"? And finally, is the author of the 1701 life of Haynes using the word *night* loosely, when, in describing a trick played by Haynes at a public performance about 1673, he writes: "There happened to be one night a play acted called Cati-line's Conspiracy, wherein there was wanting a great number of senators"? Similar passages can be cited, but these are sufficient for illustration. That Restoration plays sometimes lasted until a very late hour, in consequence of accident, etc., is brought out by Pepys' statement that on September 7, 1661, as the result of the late arrival of the king and the length of the play, Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* continued until "near nine o'clock."

<sup>44</sup> Lowe, *Bellerton*, 16.

elsewhere were given at night. Mr. Lawrence argues that evidence of this kind is not germane to the issue. I insist that it is. It is natural for the herd to desire the privileges of the select few; and any company of actors willing to inconvenience themselves, perhaps, in order to amuse the general public at an hour when the lords were being entertained would have met with an enthusiastic reception. Were not the gallants who had private plays at night following the lead of those higher up? And that the citizens of their own accord attempted to follow the practice of the lords is certain. During the festivities at court in celebration of the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine in February, 1613, certain apprentices were arrested on a Sunday night while presenting Taylor's *The Hog Hath Lost His Pearl* at the Whitefriars, which they had rented for the occasion.<sup>45</sup> At the same period the citizens presented Smith's *Hector of Germany* at the Curtain; and Fleay,<sup>46</sup> on what authority I know not, apparently says that the drama was acted at night.

Again, religious plays were sometimes given in churches and elsewhere in the evening. Rather uncertain are the two entries at Leicester for 1491 and 1492:<sup>47</sup> "Paid to the Players on New-years day at even in the church vjd." The plays at Skinner's Well and elsewhere sometimes lasted several days, the performances apparently continuing during a part of the night.<sup>48</sup> Chambers, speaking of the Newcastle-on-Tyne plays of *ca.* 1560, says they "were certainly in the evening."<sup>49</sup> In June, 1535, Henry VIII went thirty miles to see, on St. John's Eve, a dramatized version of a chapter from the *Apocalypse*.<sup>50</sup> On St. Olave's day (July 29) in 1557, a performance began in the church in Silver Street, London, at eight o'clock and continued until after midnight;<sup>51</sup> and sometime between 1613 and 1622 a play of Christ's Passion was given at Ely House "in Holborne when Gundemore [Gondomar] lay there, on Good Friday at night, at which there were thousands present."<sup>52</sup> Finally, Professor Baskervill, who has made a special study of the subject, assures me that at the midsummer festival and at church wakes, it was probably a

<sup>45</sup> *Anglia*, April 1914, pp. 148 ff.

<sup>46</sup> *Hist. London Stage*, 299.

<sup>47</sup> Chambers, *Medieval Stage*, II, 376-77.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>50</sup> *The Library*, February 1913, p. 402.

<sup>51</sup> Chambers, *Med. Stage*, II, 382.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*



common custom throughout England for people to present plays at night.

Mr. Lawrence was acquainted with the reference to the play on St. Olave's day "at night" in 1557, but remarks that "occurrences of the sort are not likely to have established any precedent." And pray, why not? When theatrical people later on could cite ecclesiastical precedent for their conduct, we may rest assured that they did it. As a matter of fact, sixteenth century plays on Sunday are survivals of Catholic precedent; and it was probably the result of ecclesiastical precedent that plays on Sunday and holy day nights continued at court throughout the reign of Elizabeth and James. And, as we shall see later, it was probably the result of these two circumstances that night plays in the regular theatres seem to have been more frequent on Sunday than on any other day.

Another reason for thinking that night plays were not unknown in the London theatres is the fact that performances at night by professional actors were frequent in other towns. In 1584 players acted by night at an inn in Leicester;<sup>53</sup> in 1598-99 the Norwich authorities allowed the Earl of Pembroke's players to perform, but forbade their playing "after nyne of the clocke on either night";<sup>54</sup> in 1618-19 the Lady Elizabeth's players acted at Plymouth "as well by night as by day";<sup>55</sup> in March, 1636, Mingay wrote from Norwich that the Red Bull Company were in town and "are well clad and act by candle light."<sup>56</sup> Provincial objections to night performances are extant. In 1595 the Canterbury "Court of Burgmote" complained of plays lasting until undue times of night, especially on Sundays, and decreed that whenever players act two days in succession, they "shall not excede the hower of nyne of the clock in the nighte of any of those daies,"<sup>57</sup> and in 1634 the city bought off actors "to avoyed disorders and night walking"; the Chester authorities, realizing that "many disorders" sometimes happen "by reason of plaies acted in the night time," decreed in 1615 that henceforth no plays be allowed in the common hall;<sup>58</sup> some time between 1600 and 1622 the Worcester authorities ordered that "no playes be had or made in

<sup>53</sup> Murray, II, 322.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 404.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 233-34.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

yeald by night time";<sup>59</sup> and finally a Shrewsbury order of 1594 forbade "any interludes or playes made within the towne or liberties upon any soundaye or in the night-time."<sup>60</sup>

In view of the conditions elsewhere, it would be a curious state of affairs if London, the center of Elizabethan theatricals, was exceptional in that it never experienced common plays at night. But there is the best of reasons to believe that the London authorities at an early date were opposed to public performances at night.<sup>61</sup> In view of the evidence above, it is surely an unfair straining of matters to interpret, as Mr. Lawrence is inclined to do, the expression in the 1571 order by the Common Council forbidding plays—"or ells at nyght of any of the same daies"—to refer only to "private performances in celebration of weddings, etc., which were invariably given at night" (p. 223).

Now why should the Council prohibit such night performances in 1571 and then pass regulations in 1574 and again in 1581 that surely did not specifically forbid such performances? There is only one possible answer—danger of the plague. Hence Mr. Lawrence argues that the 1571 order is a drastic plague regulation forbidding all performances whatsoever. There are several reasons why such an interpretation is not to be accepted: (1) the order is dated November 27, and plagues at this season of the year did not ordinarily cause much trouble; (2) the year 1571 was not a plague year;<sup>62</sup> (3) on December 6, nine days after the order above was given, the same body that issued it licensed Lord Leicester's players to act in the city "such matters as are allowed of to be played at convenient hours and tymes, so that it be not in tyme of devyne service"; and on the following January 29, the same body allowed Lord Abergauenny's players to perform in the city.<sup>63</sup>

Now in connection with this order of 1571 and the expression in the license to Lord Leicester's players just cited—"convenient howers and tymes, so that it be not tyme of devyne service"—let us return

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

<sup>60</sup> Burne-Jackson, *Shropshire Folk-Lore*, 453 note. For other references to plays at night in provincial towns see Bullen's ed. of Peele, II, 389, Dr. Doran's *Their Majesties' Servants* (1864), I, 33.

<sup>61</sup> An order against "playes" at night during Christmas season dates from 1418 (*Mod. Phil.*, Aug. 1916, p. 248).

<sup>62</sup> Murray, II, 180.

<sup>63</sup> Harrison, *Desc. of Eng.*, ed. Furnivall, IV, 318.

for a moment to objections by the city at a later date to "playeing in the dark."

Mr. Lawrence, who believes that there was "evidently no real necessity" that the London officials should legislate against night plays, thinks that the "Remedies" of 1584 contain "no reference to the possibility of night performances by artificial light, a contingency undreamt of by the Common Council" (p. 222). Surely this is strong language in face of the quotations above. And Mr. Lawrence goes on to say that the "objection is simply to playing in the dark." Let us get before us the passage in the "Remedies" which Mr. Lawrence is discussing: "That no playeing be in the dark, nor continue any such time but as any of the auditorie may returne to their dwellings in London before sonne set, or at least before dark."

What distinction does Mr. Lawrence wish to make between "performances by artificial light" and "playing in the dark"? The expression quoted above means as clearly as an Elizabethan law can mean that the Common Council was objecting both to plays at night ("no playeing be in the dark") and to plays which began in late afternoon and continued until after nightfall ("nor continue any such time but as any of the auditorie may returne to their dwellings in London before sonne set, or at least before dark").

But if the London authorities objected to night plays, it remains to be proved that the Queen or Privy Council, who had jurisdiction over the theatres outside the walls of London, objected seriously to performances at night. So far as we know, all that they were interested in was that there be no plays during divine services and plagues, and that there be no disorderly conduct or seditious dramas at the various theatres. If Elizabeth and James were opposed to night theatricals, then it seems somewhat strange that they would issue licenses allowing players to perform at night in the provinces. That the players took advantage of this privilege, we have already seen. If court performances took place regularly at night, surely the English sovereigns could not consistently deprive their subjects of a similar pleasure so long as those subjects behaved themselves. What Queen Elizabeth thought of plays on Sunday night, at least, is brought out in the following passage from Neal<sup>64</sup> regarding the year 1585:

The Lord's day was now very much profaned, by the encouraging of plays and sports in the evening, and sometimes in the afternoon. The reverend Mr. Smith M. A., in his sermon before the University of Cambridge, the first Sunday in Lent,

<sup>64</sup> *History of Puritans*, I, 302.

maintained the unlawfulness of plays; for which he was summoned before the vice-chancellor; and upon examination offered to prove that the Christian Sabbath ought to be observed by an abstinence from all worldly business, and spent in works of piety and charity; though he did not apprehend we were bound to the strictness of the Jewish precepts. The parliament had taken this matter into consideration, and passed a bill for the better and more reverent observation of the Sabbath, which the Speaker recommended to the queen in an elegant speech; but her majesty refused to pass it, under pretence of not suffering the parliament to meddle with matters of religion, which was her prerogative.

That King Charles I was not averse to public entertainments in the evening is shown by his license to Davenant, in 1639, granting him the right to erect a large theatre and obviously allowing him to give evening entertainments.<sup>65</sup>

But let us grant—what has never been proved—that the Queen and Privy Council, like the Common Council, were hostile to performances at night in the regular theatres, and that such performances were as dangerous as Mr. Lawrence says they were. Even then it is reasonable to believe that in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when laws against the stage were laxly enforced, officials would have sometimes winked at night performances. One of the common complaints against plays was that they drew apprentices and the like away from their work "to the great hinderance of the trades & traders of this Citie." Surely we may believe that Elizabethan London was sufficiently modern to possess tradesmen and officials, with the interest of the tradesmen at heart, who would have kept silent about night performances, which endangered the civic morality perhaps but did not interfere with trades and traders. If violations of laws against night performances were as common as violations of laws against plays on Sunday and during Lent, then night plays were "rather frequent" during the days of Shakspeare.

As Mr. Lawrence points out, night performances would afford greater opportunities for mischief than plays in the afternoon would; but in connection with his statement that if night performances "were of any particular frequency," then it is surprising that "in all the many documents dealing with the abuse arising out of play-acting one never finds the slightest hint concerning the troubles they occasioned," various things should be borne in mind. In the first place, it does not necessarily follow that since plays were presented at night they occasioned especial disorder. On such occasions it is reasonable to suppose that extra precautions against disorder were taken. Nor is there

<sup>65</sup> Boswell-Malone Shakspeare, III, 95.

any reason to believe that the Elizabethan audience was more riotous than those audiences which about 1700 attended plays which began at six o'clock. Again, night performances were apparently not so very common after all, especially in London. It should furthermore be remembered that various documents dealing with the evils of acting have been lost; that certain documents already cited do surely hint at the possible dangers of playing in the dark in London and the provinces; that Mr. Lawrence has himself cited a reference (p. 226) which more than hints at the trouble arising from Bankside plays after supper; that Crosse in his *Vertues Commonwealth* speaks in no uncertain terms of the dangers of common plays at night; and that Prynne in his *Histrionastix* (p. 946) is apparently speaking of plays in general when he remarks that recreations to be lawful must "not be in the night season," adding that such are especially bad in that they are the "occasions, if not provocations unto workes of darkness."

Why plays were as infrequent at night as they were in the theatres outside the jurisdiction of the Common Council, one would naturally explain by saying that the Privy Council was also opposed to such performances. But until it is satisfactorily shown that this body was consistently hostile to night plays in the Fields and on the Bankside, I shall believe that the comparative infrequency of such performances was due not to legislation, but to the fact that actors and audiences in general considered the afternoon a more desirable time for the presentation of dramas. Sometimes, however, for special reasons, the players would naturally prefer to perform in the regular theatres after supper.

What are any special reasons for such a desire? It is perhaps worth mentioning here that actors would be inclined to present at night those public theatre plays which called for elaborate fireworks and similar spectacular effects. Mr. Lawrence (p. 228n) admits that certain evidence looks as if "fireworks plays were selected for night performances."

Of more importance is the fact that Sunday plays in the open theatres after evening prayers would, unless such productions were extremely short, have caused the actors and audience to postpone supper until an inconvenient hour. The actors, therefore, provided they were allowed to do so, would naturally be inclined to give Sunday plays after supper. Now are there any reasons why such performances would have been tolerated, or at least sometimes winked at, during the reign of Elizabeth and even during the reign of James, when

Sabbatarian doctrines became more prominent and legislation more severe? I think that there are.

In a general way, it may be said that there were in England during the reign of Elizabeth and James two extreme religious parties: one, to which belonged the sovereigns and other prominent members of the Church of England, holding that the observance of Sunday was purely ceremonial and not made imperative by the Fourth Commandment; the other, to which belonged the majority of the Puritans, contending that Sunday was to be identified with the Sabbath and therefore to be kept *jure divino*. It was, of course, against the wickedness of the first party, who regarded themselves as "bound onely to the ceremonie of the day," that such persons as Quarles<sup>66</sup> and Dod<sup>67</sup> protested, when they argued that the Sabbath must be kept the full twenty-four hours and that good Christians after sunset on Sunday must not betake themselves to deeds of darkness.

Again, in a general way, it may be said that there were two<sup>68</sup> principal ideas regarding the beginning and duration of Sunday, or Sabbath, as the Sabbatarians called it: (1) Sunday began at Saturday evening and closed with Sunday evening; (2) it began with Sunday morning and closed with Monday morning. The canon law, following the old Hebrew and Athenian method of reckoning time, taught that Sunday should be observed from evening to evening; and we find in the *Decretals* of Gregory (Bk. II, tit. 9): "Omnes dies Dominicos à vespera in vesperam cum omni veneratione docemus observari." Now it is this idea that Sunday closed at sunset which explains why court entertainments were, as Hamon L'Estrange puts it, "time sans memorie . . . rarely on other than Sabbath nights"; and we have already seen what Queen Elizabeth thought on the subject. The canonists, then, to repeat, regarded a Sunday night play as no violation of the Lord's Day. Accordingly we can explain the surprise expressed in 1641, after Sabbatarianism had become powerful, that the Bishop of Huntingdon should be indicted "for suffering the said comedy to be acted in his house on a Sunday, *though it was nine o'clock at night*."<sup>69</sup> It will be remembered that in 1640 Mr. Pierce looked to

<sup>66</sup> *Judgment and Mercy*, Works, Ed. Grosart, I, 90.

<sup>67</sup> *Exposition of the Ten Commandments*, 1632, p. 132.

<sup>68</sup> Some thought that the Sabbath began at three on Saturday afternoon and should be kept until sunrise on Monday (cf. translator's preface to Prideaux's *Doctrine of the Sabbath* (1622); Baylee, *Hist. of Sabbath*, 131-2).

<sup>69</sup> Malone's *Shakspeare*, Ed. 1790, III, 127 note.

Parliament for two reforms: (1) the abolition of meetings of the Privy Council on Sunday afternoons; (2) the preventing of plays on Sunday evening.<sup>70</sup>

Nor were the Sabbatarians themselves agreed as to the limits of the Sabbath. After Bownd's famous book on the Sabbath appeared in 1595, perhaps the majority of them thought that the Sabbath included Sunday night, but this was by no means the only Sabbatarian belief. Bownd himself argued that Sabbath must be kept from morning to morning—not from evening to evening, as some contend—and he explains at great length that it should comprise Sunday night.<sup>71</sup> In this he is followed by William Perkins in 1613, who discusses at considerable length the question "When the Sabbath doth beginne"—a question, he asserts, to which "some doe answer, in the evening, and some in the morning."<sup>72</sup> But it must be remembered that John Smith in his Lenten Sermon at Cambridge in 1588 objected that "the plays at Saturday and Sunday at night were breaches of the Christian Sabbath. On Sunday, for that they were at it before the sun was set. On Saturday, for disabling their bodies for the sabbath duties."<sup>73</sup> It is also worth while to remark that Prynne in his *Histriomastix* argues at great length that the Lord's Day should be kept "from evening to evening" (p. 643), and he remarks that perhaps it is for this reason "that we have seldome any Playes or Masques at Court upon Saturday nights" (p. 642). In 1633, while in the Tower, the same author wrote

A Brief Polemicall Dissertation, concerning the true Time of the Incoation and Determination of the Lordsday—Sabbath. Wherein is clearly and irrefragably manifested . . . that the Lordsday begins and ends at Evening; and ought to be solemnized from Evening to Evening: against the Novel Errours, Mistakes of such, who groundlessly assert; that it begins and ends at Midnight, or day-breaking, and ought to be sanctified from Midnight to Midnight, or Morning to Morning.

But it must not be thought that this Puritan was willing for plays to be given after sunset on Sunday. In his *Histriomastix* he has written, after arguing that "Lordis dayes and holy dayes begin at evening":

Therefore all dancing, dicing, carding, masques, stageplaies, (together with all ordinary imployments of mens callings) upon saturday nights, are altogether unlaw-

<sup>70</sup> *Cal. State Papers, Domestic*, 1640-41, p. 212.

<sup>71</sup> *Sabbathum Veteris*, Ed. 1606, pp. 103-4, 366, 372 ff.

<sup>72</sup> *Cases of Conscience*, Bk. II, Chap. 16.

<sup>73</sup> Strype, *Annals of Reformation*, III, pt. I, 496.

ful by the verdict of the forequoted Councils; because the Lords day . . . is even then begun. Neither will it hereupon follow, that we may dance, dice, see Masques or Playes on Lordsday nights (as too many doe,) because the Lords day is then ended; since these Councils prohibit them altogether at all times whatsoever. But put case they were lawfull at other times, yet it were unseasonable to practice them on Lords day nights: For this were but to begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh; to conclude holy-daies & duties with prophane exercises; and immediately after the service of God to serve the Divell (p. 645).

Again, speaking of laws against Sunday plays enacted by Leo and Anthemius, he writes:

O that this godly Law were now in force with Christians! then Playes and Pastimes on Lords-day evenings, would not be so frequent; then those who served God at Prayers, and Sermons in the day time, would not so seriously serve the world, the flesh, the Devill, in Dancing, Dicing, Masques, and Stage-playes in the night, beginning perchance the Lords-day . . . in the spirit, but ending it in the flesh, as alas too many carnall Christians doe (p. 470).

And again he affirms that

it is impossible for any man to serve two different Masters—God in the Church, the Devill in the Playhouse; Christ in the morning, the Devill in the evening (folio 528).

Fuller in his *Church History* (ed. 1842, Bk. xi, p. 373), discussing this revival of Sabbatarian controversies in 1633, says that one of the unsettled points was when the Sabbath really began:

Some make the Sabbath to begin on Saturday night ("The evening and the morning were the first day"), and others on the next day in the morning; both agreeing on the extent thereof for four-and-twenty hours.

Discussing the view of the anti-Sabbatarians, he says (p. 375) that they "confine the observation of the day only to the few hours of public service," mixed dancing, masques, interludes, revels, etc., being "permitted in the intervals betwixt, but generally after evening service ended."

The question of the limits of the Sabbath was discussed much later than Prynne; Owen,<sup>74</sup> for example, in 1672, stating that some argue that Sabbath began with Saturday evening, others contending that it extended from "its own morning to its own evening." Vestiges, of course, of the practice of reckoning Sunday "from evening to evening" still exist.<sup>75</sup>

I have quoted Prynne at some length, because, whereas he may be speaking entirely of private plays on Sunday night, it is entirely

<sup>74</sup> Cox, *Sabbath Laws*, 325.

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, Cox, 309 note, and *Notes and Queries*, Seventh Series, X, 386.



possible, in view of what precedes and the evidence cited by Mr. Lawrence and myself for public plays on Sunday evening, that he has in mind "common" plays as well as private ones at court and elsewhere. And in view of the facts that public plays on Sunday night certainly did sometimes take place, and that at least until Bownd's book appeared in 1595, Sunday night was not consistently regarded as a part of the Sabbath even by Puritans, we naturally wonder if the various Elizabethan regulations against "Sabbath profanation" and the orders prohibiting plays "wholly" on the "Sabbath days either in the forenoon or afternoon" really applied to plays given after sunset. We are curious, too, as to how actors and lawyers, even during the reign of James, interpreted the regulations concerning plays "on Sunday."<sup>76</sup> At any rate, such regulations did not apply to court plays on Sunday night; and there were hundreds high in influence who would have had no religious or theological objection to public plays "on Sunday at night." Such would not have been over-eager to enforce a law which expressly forbade "common" plays on Sunday night; just as the anti-Sabbatarians were not over-zealous in preventing Sunday performances in the daylight, provided they were not held during divine services. And finally, who can tell how many productions which were really "common plays" were presented under the guise of private performances after those laws were enacted under James and Charles which forbade "common plays" after evening prayers on Sunday?

Such are the reasons for thinking that plays were given on Sunday nights in the regular theatres. Mr. Lawrence indeed believes that night performances were confined to Sunday. In this he is, I think, mistaken.

In the first place, it will be noticed that some of the special reasons given above for expecting Sunday night performances would also account for performances on holy day nights.<sup>77</sup> Again, I am inclined to believe that plays after supper were given on Midsummer Night, a

<sup>76</sup> Examples of where "Sunday" had to be interpreted may be cited. On May 7, 1594, for instance, the "Presbyterie of Glasgow" ordained that Mungo Craig must not play on his pipes "on the Sondaye fra the sun rising till the sun going to" (Cox, *Sabbath Laws and Sabbath Duties*, 309).

<sup>77</sup> Note that at least when Davenport wrote his *New Tricke to Cheat the Devil* (1639) taverns in the city were, on holy days, compelled to keep "shut till sixe" (v. 2); in the Suburbs, where the law was not so well enforced, the taverns frequently opened at three.

time which for generations had been a period for general festivity. At any rate the following incident should be considered in this connection. On June 23, 1592, the Privy Council, fearing another such outbreak as had occurred on the Bankside on June 12, issued an edict<sup>78</sup> commanding a strict watch, since

her Majestie is informed that certaine apprentyces and other idle people theire adherentes that were authors and partakers of the late mutynous and foule disorder in Southwarke . . . have a further purpose and meaninge on Midsummer eveninge or Midsommer nighte or about that tyme to renewe their lewd assemblye together by cullour of the time.

To avoid such unlawful assemblies,

yt is thoughte meete you shall take order that there be no playes used in anye place neere thereaboutes, as the theator, curtayne or other usuall places where the same are comonly used . . . untill the feast of St. Michael.

When we remember that the disorder of June 12 took place about eight o'clock in the evening after the rioters had assembled "by occasion and pretence of their meeting at a play," the passage above seems to imply that the Privy Council was acquainted with assemblies at the Theatre and other "usuall places" on Midsummer Night. Perhaps it is worth while, in discussing evening plays at such a period of festivity as Midsummer Night, to note that Stow in his *Survey of London* says that on May Day the old citizens of London were wont to occupy themselves in various amusements "all the day long," and that "toward the evening they had stage plays, and bonfires in the streets."

Again, there is evidence that *new* plays were sometimes presented in the evening. In the second act of the play *Histrionmastix* the actors rehearse "The Prodigal Child." A prologue "for Lords" and an epilogue are spoken, after which the following dialogue occurs:

Gulch: I, but how if they do not clap their hands?

Posthaste. No matter so they thump us not.

Come, come, we poets have the kindest wretches to our Ingles.

Belch. Why, whats an Ingle man?

Post. One whose hands are hard as battle doors with clapping at baldness.

Clowt. Then we shall have rare ingling at the prodigall Child.

Gulch. I, ant be played upon a good night. Lets give it out for Friday.<sup>79</sup>

It is possible, of course, that Gulch is using *night* loosely, but in view of what follows it is better to believe that he really means what

<sup>78</sup> Gildersleeve, *Gov. Regulations*, 179-81.

<sup>79</sup> Is this an allusion to plays on the evening of Good Friday? Note the tremendous crowd that saw Christ's Passion at Ely House on Good Friday evening when Count Gondomar was present (Chambers, II, 382).

he says. On June 10, 1613, Daborne wrote to Henslowe:<sup>80</sup> "Before God they shall not stay one hour for me for I can this week deliver in ye last word & will yt night they play thear new play read this." On June 13 he wrote:<sup>81</sup> "I pray, sir, let me have 40s. in earnest of ye Arreighnment & one Munday night I will meet yu at ye new play & conclud farther the content." We have already referred to statements in various prologues and epilogues which may indicate that plays were acted at night. It is probable that some of these prologues and epilogues were written for first performances, and that these were "first night" performances. Webster, in attempting to excuse the failure of *The White Devil*, asserts that "it was acted in so dull a time of winter and presented in so open and black a theatre." May this not be a reference to the "first night" performance of a play in a public theatre? Apparently, *The White Devil* was acted at the Red Bull or Curtain, which were not so well equipped as the Globe, Fortune, and the private houses. Night presentation, a second-rate playhouse, and the language of a man who had produced an unsuccessful production would adequately explain Webster's "so black a theatre." One is not justified in using the passage to show that the better Elizabethan open playhouses could not be satisfactorily (to the Elizabethans) lighted artificially during ordinary weather.

Finally, the following passage, found in Henry Harrington's poem prefixed to the 1647 edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, seems to indicate that the second performance, in which Elizabethan authors were especially interested since they shared the profits,<sup>82</sup> was sometimes given at night:

By your leave, gentlemen: you wits o' the age,  
You that both furnish'd have and judg'd the stage,  
You who the poets and the actors fright,  
Lest that your censure thin the second night.

Such is the evidence which indicates that Elizabethan plays were given in public theatres at such times of darkness as to make imperative the employment of more or less artificial illumination; and I have recently discussed elsewhere<sup>83</sup> the probable nature and disposition of stage lights in the open theatres. Keeping this evidence in mind, let us, in conclusion, examine Mr. Lawrence's *general objec-*

<sup>80</sup> *Henslowe Papers*, ed. Greg, 72.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>82</sup> Collier, *Annals of Stage* (ed. 1831), III, 424-25.

<sup>83</sup> *STUDIES IN PHILOLOGY*, April, 1916.

tions to lights in the public playhouses otherwise than "during the traffic of the stage."

First, he argues that artificial illumination would incur a "serious extra expense." But surely this extra expense occasioned by a sufficient number of cressets or "lamps" to light the stage of a theatre would not have been such a serious burden after all; it would not have been so expensive as lighting the private theatres by candles,<sup>84</sup> where the price of admission, to be sure, was considerably higher than in the public houses but where the audiences were likewise much smaller. Extra expense would, of course, not have been welcomed, but the actors would willingly have put up with it rather than to forbear acting after evening prayers<sup>85</sup> or to endure the objection which the audience would inevitably have raised at a "black" theatre. And while the cost of illumination for a single performance could not have been such a serious expense, it would have amounted to a considerable sum in the course of a year. That the actors of at least one public theatre so regarded it, there is no doubt. In 1635, the actors at the Globe asserted that the charges for hired men, boys, music, "lights," etc., at that theatre amounted to £900 or £1000 per annum, or about £3 a day (Murray, II, 159). Now if "lights" had been so exceptional as Mr. Lawrence would believe, surely they would not have been singled out for enumeration along with such regular and expensive items as hired men, boys, and music.

In his desire to show that artificial illumination was a rarity in the public theatres, Mr. Lawrence, it seems to me, is over-reluctant to accept the fair and logical interpretation of Cotgrave's expression, "cressets such as are used in our playhouses." The fact that two or three somewhat indefinite references<sup>86</sup> to the employment of cressets

<sup>84</sup> In 1639 the statement was made that the actors of Salisbury Court were allowed "halfe for lights, both waxe and tallow, which halfe all winter is neare 5s. a day" (Maas, *Eng. Theatertruppen*, p. 255). We may be sure that this represents a very liberal calculation on the part of the managers.

<sup>85</sup> To Mr. Lawrence's assertion that plays at night would have incurred extra expense for lights, it may be replied that the price of admission for such performances may have been raised. At least we know nothing to the contrary. Whenever a new play was given at night, we can rest assured that the price was raised.

<sup>86</sup> Mr. Lawrence cites an account of a 1554 celebration in honor of the marriage of Lord Strange to the daughter of the Earl of Cumberland. The passage seems to say that after supper a play called "Jube the Sane" was acted, "Ix. cressets and C. of torches" being employed. It seems inconceivable that such an extremely large number of flaming and smoking lights would have been crowded into a hall,

at private entertainments exist does not at all indicate that they were regularly used to illuminate private theatres. They are not the sort of lights to be expected in a closed auditorium; and in view of what precedes, before one can dogmatically restrict Cotgrave's reference as applying to private theatres only, one must do two things, it seems to me, which have never yet been done: (1) prove that cressets—like torches and candles—*were* used in private playhouses; (2) show that they were *not* employed in public theatres.

Again, Mr. Lawrence, in his endeavor to minimize the use of artificial lights in the public theatres, unintentionally gives a wrong impression when he writes: "That the players desired to make the most of natural light and thus minimize expense is shown by the fact that they constructed their theatres in the Fields and on the Bankside with open roofs and abundance of windows" (p. 220). No one will deny that they desired to make the most of natural light, but this was decidedly a minor consideration when the actors selected the sites of their playhouses and determined the architecture of their buildings. They selected "open" places because the authorities objected to theatres in crowded districts and because the sites in the Fields and Bankside were not only outside the jurisdiction of the Common Council but were cheap as well; and they constructed "open" houses largely for the reason that the authorities considered such structures less dangerous for the spreading of plagues.

Finally, Mr. Lawrence argues that a grave risk would have been incurred by the placing of a considerable number of naked lights throughout a large wooden building; and he is inclined to believe in this connection that the first Fortune<sup>87</sup> caught fire at twelve o'clock

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no matter how large and well ventilated that hall may have been. I am inclined to believe, therefore, that "Jube the Sane" was an out-door tilting (*Juga Cama*). Cf. Camden Society edition of Machyn's Diary (p. 82) and Stowe's comment, *ibid.* pp. 342-43. Stowe says "lxx. cresset lights" were employed.

<sup>87</sup> Greg (*Henslowe's Diary*, II, 65) says that the origin of the fire which consumed the Fortune is unknown. Prynne (*Histriomastix*, folio 556) gives an atmosphere of mystery to the event, when he asserts that he will refrain from reciting "the sudden fearful burning even to the ground, both of the Globe and the Fortune Play-houses, no man perceiving how these fires came." Howes (*Malone-Boswell Shakspeare*, III, 55) and Sir Richard Baker (*Chronicle*, ed. 1653, p. 615) are more specific, when they write that the Fortune was destroyed by "negligence of a candle."

That the fire started inside the theatre is made probable by John Chamberlain's statement (*Malone-Boswell*, III, 55) that there were "two other houses on fire, but with great labour and danger were saved."

during a Sunday night performance (pp. 227-28). Now, in the first place, as I have shown in my note on stage lights, referred to above, there is no reason why naked lights should have been scattered throughout the body of the open theatre; they were probably confined to stage regions. And in the second place, whereas even naked stage lights were perhaps rather dangerous, we know that Elizabethan actors were entirely willing to take such risks. They risked repeatedly in more ways than one the anger of municipal and crown officials; they risked burning their private theatres when they consistently lighted them by a large number of naked lights; they risked burning all their playhouses when time and time again they employed fireworks in the "heavens" and elsewhere, and when they flashed flames from "hell" and hell-mouths; they burnt the Globe by firing chambers, and they continued to fire chambers after the second Globe was built. The Fortune was burnt by "negligence of a candle," and they rebuilt it of brick to lessen the chances of a similar accident perhaps; but there is no doubt that they continued to illuminate the stage of this very theatre, when occasion demanded, by means of naked lights.

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Did the Fortune catch during a performance? According to Chamberlain, the fire lasted two hours; and according to Alleyn, "this night att 12 of ye clock ye fortune was burnt." Alleyn may possibly mean that the building was consumed by twelve o'clock, after having burnt about two hours; but he more probably means that the fire started at about twelve. Now twelve o'clock is rather late for a public play to be in progress, though night plays at court and elsewhere sometimes lasted until even later. In view of the lateness of the hour, I am inclined to think that the candle which caused the destruction of the Fortune was being used by those who were dividing the receipts taken in at a Sunday evening performance. It was a regular practice to divide the "gatherings" after the play concluded (cf. *Actor's Remonstrance*, 1643; epilogue to Brome's *English Moor*; contract between Mead and Henslowe and a company of actors about 1613, *Henslowe Papers*, ed. Greg, 24; Wallace, *First London Theatre*, 129, 142). Again, if the Fortune actually caught fire during a Sunday night performance, it is strange that Puritans such as Prynne and Beard, who made so much of God's judgments on Sabbath-breakers, did not make use of this "judgment" as they did the earlier one at Paris Garden. But it is equally strange that they neglected to mention that the Fortune burnt on Sunday, whether during a performance or not.